



## **MAMLECHET HACHAI: DIFFERENCES**

**WE’RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT SOME OF THE WAYS THAT, AS PEOPLE, WE ARE LIKE ALL THE OTHER ANIMALS, AND SOME OF THE WAYS THAT WE ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEM.**

### **HOW ARE WE LIKE ALL THE OTHER ANIMALS?**

- Do we have to have food as they do? (Yes, but of course we eat them and they eat all the other animals and plants.)
- Do we need to have shelter as they do?
- Do we have to eliminate our wastes as they do—“go to the bathroom”?
- Do we have to find mates to have offspring (“children”) as they do?
- Do we become old and die as they do?

### **IN WHAT WAYS ARE WE DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHER ANIMALS?**

- The Torah teaches that, mostly, people are not good or bad at heart but that sometimes they have an “inclination” to do good and sometimes they have an “inclination” to do bad.
- That word “inclination” has the word “incline,” like “lean,” built into it; so sometimes we *lean* toward doing good and sometimes we *lean* the other way, toward doing bad—and we’re free to choose which we to do.
- Do animals have an “evil inclination” as we do? (What about when they do things we think are bad or destructive, like when a puppy rips up the sofa or a fox kills a chicken?)
- Do animals have what we call “free will” to choose between doing right and wrong as we do?
- Do animals’ parents teach them how to behave?
- How do we learn to know the difference between right and wrong?
- Can animals study Torah to learn how to improve the world and their own lives through justice, peace, and kindness?
- Why can’t animals study Torah?

### **SO WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US AND THE OTHER ANIMALS?**

- We have been given “free will,” so we can choose to do what is right or wrong?
- We have been given the intelligence or “smarts” to study Torah to learn *what* is right and *what* is wrong, so we can improve the world and our own lives.
- Can anyone teach us the Hebrew word for intelligence? (Seikhel—שכל.)
- When you’re tempted to do something that’s wrong—like take something that doesn’t belong to you or be mean to someone—how can you use your *seikhel* to decide whether or not to do it? (Think through the potential consequences for yourself and everyone else who may be affected by your actions.)



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